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ABSTRACT

The mechanisms through which lifelong learning affects health were examined by analyzing research from the fields of education, the economics of education, the economics of health, medical sociology, health promotion, health psychology, health inequalities, and medicine. The first part of the analysis dealt with the correlations between education and health and directions of causality connecting education and health. The next phase of the analysis focused on the mechanisms through which learning affects health. Particular attention was paid to the following topics: economic factors; health-related behaviors; resilience and dealing with stress; relationships with medical professionals and access to medical services; and education and healthy societies. A substantial body of evidence suggesting the existence of positive correlations between education and physical and mental health was identified. A common theme emerging from the research was that the immediate outcomes of education play a fundamental role in generating the behaviors, skills, and personal attributes that have early but lasting effects on mental health and cumulative effects on physical health. It was suggested that participation in education promotes health by increasing participants' self-esteem, self-efficacy, problem-solving skills, aspirations, future orientation, interpersonal trust, social competency, antidiscriminatory attitudes, and sense of belonging. (Contains 9 tables/figures, 10 endnotes, and 214 references.) (MN)

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